GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2375
ANSWERED ON:15.12.2004
REVIEW OF 1974 PROTOCOL
Sidhu Shri Navjot Singh

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has received any request to undertake a comprehensive review of the 1974 protocol governing visits of Sikh pilgrims to their holy place in Pakistan so that journey across the borders became smooth and without restrictions;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the Government`s reaction thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) to (c) Based on the requests received from time to time, Government had, during the Secretary (Culture) level meeting between India and Pakistan on August 3-4, 2004 in New Delhi, inter alia, suggested that the existing 1974 Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines be amended to include more shrines in both the countries, and that the size of the pilgrim groups could be increased from 3000 to 5000 on the occasions of Baisakhi and Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev; 1000 to 2000 on the occasion of Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev; and 500 to 1000 on the occasion of Barsi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Government have also suggested additional visits on occasions other than those covered under the Protocol.

A formal response is awaited from Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Government of India have been facilitating the visit of the pilgrim groups from Pakistan to places beyond the 1974 Protocol.